(b) if so, whether any concrete proposal in this regard has been prepared by the Ministry for the approval of Government;

(c) whether the Ministry of External Affairs has submitted India's acceptance in TAP and has suggested that it has long term significance going beyond pure energy needs;

(d) if so, whether India has started talks on this project with these countries; and

(e) if so, by when final decision is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (e) An Indian delegation led by the Minister of State for Petroleum & Natural Gas visited Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on 14-15 Februrary, 2006 to participate in the 9th Steering Committee Meeting of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) project as an 'Observer'. The Steering Committee invited India to become an official member of the project. The Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas brought the matter before the Cabinet in May 2006 after inter-Ministerial discussions and the Cabinet accorded 'in principle' approval to the proposal for India joining the TAP project. The matter has been taken up with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the lead development partner for the project, to appropriately take up India's request for joining the project with the Governments of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Exploration of oil and gas

1599. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) The names of public organisations engaged in the exploration of oil and natural gas in the country;

(b) the places where the sources of oil have discovered by these organisations during the years 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06; and

(c) the possibilities of oil exploration perceived so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) The following Public Sector

Undertakings (PSUs) are engaged in exploration activities:

— Oil & Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC)

— Oil India Limited (OIL)

— Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation Limited (GSPCL)

— Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)

— Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL)

— Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL)

— National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC)

— Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL)

(b) In the last three years (2003-06), oil and gas discoveries have been made by ONGC and OIL in Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tripura, eastern and western offshore areas.

(c) India has potential of about 28 billion tonnes of hydrocarbon resources falling in 26 sedimentary basins of India. Out of this, 8.2 billion tonnes of in-place reserves have been established.

Tax holiday for pipeline projects

1600. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has requested for allowing a 10 year tax holiday for oil and gas pipeline laying projects;

(b) if so, whether his Ministry has taken up the matter with the Ministry of Finance;

(c) if so, the reaction of Ministry of Finance thereto; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The Ministry is in consultation with the Ministry of Finance on the issue of tax concessions to oil and gas pipeline projects.